

## **Feride the Wren: Teaching Profession for Turkish Language Pre-service Teachers**

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### **Abstract**

Personal experiences, previous school life, teachers in their close environment, cultural and sociological dynamics in society, and books and movies are some of the factors in the research area of the teaching profession affecting pre-service teachers' views. Turkish Language pre-service teachers are supposed to deal with literate texts as the requirement of their field. The current research aims to examine how Turkish language pre-service teachers perceive teaching as a profession through their evaluation of *The Wren* by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, which has been representing the role model and idealist teacher for so long in Turkey. Designed as a qualitative study, the data was gathered from the senior students attending in Turkish Language Education Department at Pamukkale University in two phases in the 2021-2022 academic year. Results suggest a close association between what pre-service teachers think about "being a teacher" and how they perceive themselves as teachers. Results also suggest that preservice teachers idealized a good teacher and take attention to the forming and guiding function of the teacher. Pre-service teachers do not perceive Feride as an ideal teacher and cannot imagine her as their colleague however she is strongly coherent with their profile of a good teacher.

**Key Words:** Teaching profession, being a teacher, the wren, pre-service teachers

### **Introduction**

Teaching is a human-oriented, scientific, psychological, and cultural profession that is based on devotion, requires personal traits as well as some other various skills, has the power to impact individuals and society, and lastly gets a great responsibility in planning and processing the instruction (Ünsal, 2021). That multi-dimensional identification of teaching has led researchers to study diverse topics related to teachers, teacher identity, professional development, and so on. For instance, a body of literature has been dealing with the issue of teachers' professional identity, which is a process based on educational beliefs, is constructed, and reinforced by teaching education, and is contextually formed (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bukor, 2011) in terms of various context. What affects pre-service teachers' construction of their professional identities and their views on "being a teacher" might be considered as family, workplace, and society (Bauer & McAdams, 2004). Pre-service teachers might perform their social roles and professional identities by being directly or indi-

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rectly related to their environment. Personal experiences, previous school life, teachers in their close environment, cultural and sociological dynamics in the society, and books and movies are some of the factors affecting this performance.

Current research has an effort to examine how pre-service Turkish language teachers perceive teaching as a profession through their own experiences. In this manner, pre-service teachers' perception of The Wren, who has been serving as a role model and idealist teacher for so long in Turkey, is taken as a tool to understand their views on "being a teacher". Pre-service teachers' views on "what is to be a teacher" and "how it is perceived in society" are tried to filter from their perceptions about "Who am I at this moment?" and "What do I want to become?" (Beijaard, Meijer&Verloop, 2004).

### **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

Having a dynamic and changeable nature, teacher identity has many underlying dimensions including previous educational experiences, culture, beliefs, political and social issues, psychological properties, workplace, and seniority. Lasky's (2005) statement about how teachers identify themselves to themselves and others outlines their perceptions of professional identities. This claim includes the questions 'who am I as a teacher?', and 'Who do I want to become?' (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). Another attractive research area about the teaching profession is the initial teaching education in terms of pre-service teachers' backgrounds, views, perceptions, beliefs, and future expectations. Initial teacher education institutions give immense importance to training effective teachers therefore increasingly need to be known what kind of dynamics are lying behind "being a teacher". In another and similar statement by Bullough (2002), "what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning and self as a teacher is of vital concern to teacher education" (p. 21). Kelchtermans (2005) points out the pre-service teachers' perceptions about "who they are as a teacher now, and what kind of a teacher they will be in the future" as a dynamic structure of their patterns about the teaching profession. Research on pre-service teachers' professional identity and their views on the teaching profession underline the importance of previous beliefs and experiences on student teachers' perceptions as well as their identification of self as teachers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Eđmir & elik, 2019; Erdem, 2020; Flores, 2020; Friesen & Besley, 2013; Kavrayıcı, 2020; Lutovac & Flores, 2021; McKay, 2019; Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010).

Not only personal experiences and beliefs but also historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural factors affect the teachers' self-perceptions and their idealized teacher images (Chong & Low, 2009; Pellika, Lutovac&Kaasila, 2020). When the idealized teacher image is in question, this image has not changed since the foundation of the Republic in 1923 in Turkey. Although teachers' status and dignity change according to cultural dynamics in different countries, the teaching profession has always

been regarded as a “sacred” profession due to its direct relation with humans (Şişman, 2005). Approaching “teaching” as a professional identity is rooted in the last period of the Ottoman Empire and has been on the rise in the early years of the Turkish Republic. Teachers were treated as change agents both to disseminate the new republic principles and ideology and build the modern society of Turkey (Karaman, Acar, Kılıç, Buluş & Erdoğan, 2013). Teachers have always been characterized as such that: they enlighten the society, they are responsible for the development of society and individuals, and they are devoted role models, and leaders. There have been many roles attributed to the teachers such as instructors-educators, leaders, change actors, and mother-father (Helvacı, 2007). This almost natural role of being a conversant and sophisticated personality is transmitted culturally to the generations. In this manner, teachers perform these roles naturally; illuminate others, devote themselves, and be caring mothers.

Although it is not written as a teacher story (Karagülle, 2016), *The Wren* is one of the first remembered novels regarding the teaching profession in Turkey. Reşat Nuri Güntekin (1889-1956), a well-known Turkish author, wrote his most famous novels in the first years of the Turkish Republic. As the novelist of teachers and middle-class state officers (Kaplan, 1957), Güntekin usually refers to the literate and modern side of Turkish society. One of his novels, *The Wren*, made a great sound at the time of its publication, and its main character, Feride (having a pseudonym the Wren), represents a young and idealist teacher as well as the new modern woman identity of the Turkish Republic. *The Wren* is still on the reference list for pre-service teachers. There have been various research dealing with Feride as a teacher profile (Akcan & Polat, 2016; Duymaz, 2000; Karaca, 2012; Karagülle, 2016; Orakçı, 2016; Özden, 2015; Uludağ, 2008; Yılmaz, 2007).

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

Current research aims to investigate the views of Turkish language pre-service teachers on the “teaching profession” depending on various sources and their own experiences. In this manner, the research is designed as phenomenological research. In phenomenological research, a phenomenon is identified through the experiences of the participants, and how they perceive these experiences (Creswell, 2003). The current research aims to understand the views of pre-service teachers through their past and current experiences on learning and teaching. “Being a teacher” is a referred phenomenon for the research considering the pre-service teacher identity theoretical framework. In this context, the researchers try to figure out how pre-service teachers construct their views on “being a teacher” based on some variables such as personal traits, observations on teaching image in the society and their previous teachers. Furthermore, the research related the phenomenon to a fictional character who is an important teacher figure in history of Turkish society. In this context, the current rese-

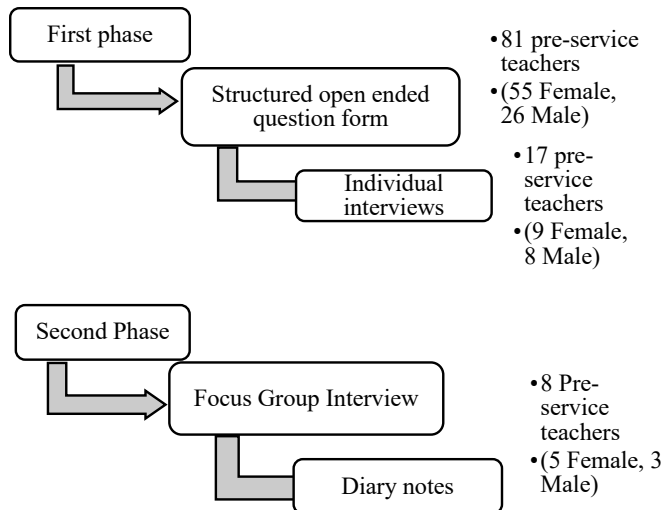
arch employs interpretative phenomenology by van Manen (1990, as cited in Creswell, 2013), and deals with Turkish language pre-service teachers' views on "being a teacher" in terms of and through a novel character. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the views of Turkish language pre-service teachers on "being a teacher"?
2. What are the views of Turkish language pre-service teachers on "being a teacher" in terms of Feride the Wren?

### Participants

Data was gathered from the senior students attending in Turkish Language Education Department at the Faculty of Education at Pamukkale University in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year in two phases. In the first phase, a total of 81 pre-service teachers answered a structured open-ended question form. 17 pre-service teachers who emphasized the social role of teachers and who related the good teachers' properties to their personal properties were invited for the individual interviews.

In the second phase, 12 volunteered pre-service teachers were asked to read *The Wren* by Reşat Nuri Güntekin and keep a diary about it. After two months of break, pre-service teachers were invited to a focus group interview. Three of them had special issues and one of them had health issues so the rest of the 8 pre-service teachers participated in the focus group interview. As the pre-service teachers in the second phase also took place in the first phase, all the participants were anonymously coded as P1, P2, P3...etc.



**Figure 1.** The phases and the participants of the study

Figure 1 displays the phases of the study and the number of participants. Most of the participants expressed that they willingly chose the Turkish Language Education Department. Participants underlined the positive impact of their previous teachers, especially their Turkish language or literature teachers on their choice. Another factor of their choice was their deep interest in the field. A few participants stated that their exam score or their family wishes made them choose this department. Statements of the participants showed that most of the participants wanted to be a teacher, and the main factor of this choice is their previous teachers.

As for the individual interviews, the pre-service teachers who focused on teachers' social role in the open-ended question form were invited intentionally. Almost each of the participants emphasized the leader and guide role of the teacher. Pre-service teachers remembered Mr. Keating in *Dead Poets Society* as an impressive fictional teacher character. The other two movies on teaching characters were *Mona Lisa Smile* and *Hichki*. Only one of the pre-service teachers mentioned *The Wren* by Reşat Nuri Güntekin.

8 pre-service teachers participated in the focus group interview. The pre-service teachers were explained below:

P4: Female. She chose the teaching profession because of her college entrance exam score.

P16: Female. She has many relatives and close friends working as teachers. Her idols have always been her teachers.

P17: Female. She had a negative experience with one of her teachers and decided to be the opposite teacher.

P28: Male. His Turkish language teacher had a profound impact on his choice. He identified his teacher as devoted and unselfish.

P32: Female. His high school literature teacher evoked his interest in the field. First, he chose Language and Literature Department but then he decided to be a teacher and changed his department.

P41: Female. She chose the teaching profession because she thinks it is good for her individual development. She is a graduate of the sociology department, then she started Turkish language education.

P52: Male. He decided to be a teacher when he was a primary school student. His teachers and family encouraged him.

P55: Female. Her literature teacher was a role model for her. She also remembered the positive effect of her other teachers.

### **Data collection**

The study has two phases; the first of which consists of an open-ended question form used for the views of pre-service teachers on the teaching profession and being a teacher.

For the question form, open-ended questions on the conceptual framework of pre-service teachers' views on the teaching profession, and how they describe themselves as teachers are organized. For the questions, teacher identity, professional identity, teacher profession, and early teacher identity literature are attributed. The form was sent to two experts in the Turkish Language Education Department and two experts in Curriculum and Instruction Department. After the feedback, the form was deliberated to three pre-service teachers for the pilot study. The last version of the form was sent to senior students of the Turkish Language Education Department both as a google form and in hand. The open-ended question form has 12 questions and lasts approximately 10 minutes to fill out. Some examples of the questions are: "What do you think about the teaching profession?", "What kind of a teacher you will be?" "How is the social profile of teachers in Turkey?"

After analyzing the open-ended question forms 17 pre-service teachers were invited and interviewed. These interviews were a detailed conversation of the first open-ended question form and included a question for a fictional teacher character that the participants remembered. Interviews were made face-to-face during office hours and taped. One interview lasted approximately 22 minutes.

As for the second phase of the study, semi-structured focus group interview form was developed by the researchers. The form includes questions about the relationship between participants' views on being a teacher and Feride (the main character) and her teaching career. The form was sent to two experts in the Turkish Language Education Department and two experts in Curriculum and Instruction Department. Some sample questions are such: "What kind of a teacher is Feride for you?", "How do you associate Feride's personality and teaching style? "What if Feride is a teacher now?". The pre-service teachers were expected to keep the diaries in terms of interview questions.

The Focus group interview was set out in a meeting room in the Faculty of Education at a common determining day and hour. Preservice teachers sat around a round table, face-to-face. The interview was videotaped with the permission of the participants and lasted 59 minutes and 12 seconds. The diaries were collected at the end of the meeting.

### **Data analysis**

Descriptive analysis was used for the data of open-ended question forms and individual interviews. In this manner, the data was analysed according to the pre-determined theoretical framework or themes and presented as an organized and interpreted way (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Two researchers coded the data separately, and the questions were guided for the coding process. After the coding process, common themes and categories were organized. In this part of the study, a general viewpoint of pre-service teachers on "being a teacher" is tried to be figured out.

Content analysis was used for the data from focus group interviews and diaries. By this process, the researchers try to reach concepts and relations which can explain the data in a deeper way with an accompany of a theoretical framework as well (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Two researchers coded the data separately, and common themes and categories were organized. In this part of the study, all the themes and categories are grounded the theoretical background on pre-service teachers' identity. This theoretical background is framed according to two main questions: "Who am I at this moment?" and "Who do I want to become?" (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard, et al., 2004; Kelchtermans, 2005; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). These questions were led by the researchers in the data analysis process.

The findings are organized as parallel themes and categories get from the two phases of the study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Various data resources (open-ended question form – individual interview form/ focus group interview form – diaries) were used for the triangulation. Each data was analyzed by the researchers separately and compared for the common themes. Direct quotations were given for the findings. Detailed information was given about the data collection, data analysis, and participants.

### **Findings**

In this section, the findings from the data set of the two phases of the study were presented under the research questions.

#### **Findings of the first research question**

The first question of the research is "What are the views of Turkish language pre-service teachers on "being a teacher"? Themes, categories, and codes were given in Table 1.

**Table 1.***What are the views of Turkish language pre-service teachers?*

THEME	CATEGORY	CODES
A Teacher	General description	Sacred, touching lives, giving a form, respectable, role model, devoted, responsible
	A good teacher	Equal, fair, tolerant, emphatic, loves teaching, loves students, good communication with the students, sophisticated, open to professional development, touches lives, a leader, a guide
	The roles of a teacher	Classroom management, enriching the instruction, managing the learning, recognizing the needs, supportive, preparing for life, a leader, shaping the society, training ethical person, a role model
Myself as a teacher	Personal traits	Quiet, patient, equal, fair, tolerant, emphatic, parent person, objective, caring, sharing, love speaking, open to improvement
	Professional traits	Contribute to the improvement of society and social change, touching lives, leaving traces, creating a change, personal development, economic independence, being remembered,
The teacher I am going to be	Personal traits	Good-humored, fair, disciplined, good communicator
	Professional traits	Planned, open to improvement, sophisticated, being loved and respected, sensitive to the needs, leaving traces
The teaching profession in society	Point of view	Invaluable, sacred, easy, having so many holidays, babysitter, responsible for everything
	Difficulties	Appointments, financial problems, perspectives of the families, decreasing dignity



Table 1 shows the themes, categories, and codes that are related to the first research question. The findings of the first question are presented according to the themes.

### ***A Teacher***

Pre-service teachers made a general description of “being a teacher” as well as the characteristics of a good teacher and the roles that a teacher should have. In this manner, the descriptions of the pre-service teachers strongly underlined the social function and effect of a teacher. They often stated that a teacher is a change agent, responsible for the development of the individual and the society, and in turn is accepted as a sacred/divine profession.

*Teaching is a kind of profession that contributes to the development and change of society (P25)*

*Touching a life at the very beginning, being useful..these are so exciting (P15)*

*The most sacred profession which prepares people for life (P35)*

Pre-service teachers constantly underlined that teaching requires devotion, patience, and responsibility. Being a role model is another important factor of being a teacher for the participants. They expressed that a teacher gives the lead with his/her lifestyle and manners both in and out of the school.

*It (teaching) requires love and patience (P39)*

*Requires devotion and responsibility (P64)*

*Should be a role model in every part of his/her life (P66)*

The other category under the theme of “A teacher?” is the description and properties of a good teacher. It is striking to see that these properties are mostly the characteristics of an individual. Participants emphasized that being patient, merciful, and good-humored is a natural personal trait of a good teacher.

*Smiling, merciful, consistent, and patient (P5)*

*Having very high empathy skills (P19)*

Besides the personal traits, pre-service teachers listed some professional skills that a good teacher is required to have. These skills are closely related to the social and individual change role of a teacher.

*A good instructor; a good communicator (P43)*

*Leaves a meaningful trace in the lives of children (P29)*

*A good teacher makes the right decisions to touch his/her students' lives (P26)*

The roles of a teacher are parallel with the qualifications of a good teacher. According to pre-service teachers, a good teacher should not be content with personal qualifications but tries to develop and improve the self without forgetting social responsibilities.

*Leading to the class, being a good guide, and having a strong rhetoric (P18)*

*Maintains discipline, and transfers knowledge and experience (P17)*

*Not only to teach but also to educate, and prepare for life (P12)*

*Has to be a life guide and idol for the students (P78)*

### ***Myself as a teacher***

As the pre-service teachers directed the professional identity mirror to themselves, they not only tried to identify their views on being a teacher and themselves as teachers but also uncovered their expectations. In this manner pre-service teachers' statements about "who am I as a teacher?" indirectly reflected their identification of the teaching profession, the social place of a teacher, and their future expectations. They related their characteristics with what they think a good teacher is required to have. Findings show how pre-service teachers think about the necessities of the teaching profession following how they perceive themselves.

*I am patient, emphatic (P27)*

*Patient, tolerant and lovely (P40)*

*Patience-sincerity-good humored (P74)*

*I am a researcher; a good communicator; and good at rhetoric and diction (P50)*

When the pre-service teachers described themselves as teachers, they also mentioned their expectations and social role in the teaching profession. These descriptions show that pre-service teachers have the responsibility of being a teacher and want to perform this profession properly.

*Respected by society, having a status (P31)*

*Performing my job properly and being appointed (P10)*

*Touching my students' lives (P33)*

*Sharing what I know and contributing to training a sophisticated generation (P47)*

### ***The teacher I am going to be***

Pre-service teachers did not go further from their views on required teacher properties while they were imagining themselves as teachers in the future. Having no teaching experience yet, they reflected their current perceptions of their future teacher identity and profiled as a positive picture.

*I will be a disciplined teacher who likes to teach with games and activities (P18)*

*I believe I will be a tolerant, good-humored, maternal teacher (P20)*

*I want to be an idealist teacher and am planning to make learning enjoyable for my students (P32)*

*I will be a teacher using various materials in class and having good relationships with the students (P65)*

### ***The teaching profession in society***

Another important finding of the research is the social status of a teacher according to the pre-service teachers. Unfortunately, pre-service teachers had negative comments about how the teaching profession is perceived in Turkish society. They regrettably stated that the teaching profession is perceived as an easy job and that each person can perform it no matter his/her educational background. They strongly felt uncomfortable with the situation.

*Unfortunately, the teaching profession reminds people of vacations in our country. There are so many people thinking that teaching is so easy (P25)*

*They think that “why do teachers get such a salary, they do nothing, moreover, they have so many holidays”. (P58)*

Opposite to the image that the pre-service made for “being a teacher”, they stated that teachers cannot have the dignity and respect that they deserve in society. The biggest problem they face is the appointment.

*Teachers were much more respected before, they had active roles. This is no truer (P17)*

*This biggest handicap is not being respected and not being paid as they deserve (P35)*

*The appointment problem, low income...(P56)*

### **Findings of the second research question**

For the second research question, volunteered 8 pre-service teachers read The Wren and kept a diary. The focus group interview data set and the diaries were analyzed and coded by the researchers separately. Here, the diaries were used to figure out a detailed comprehension of Feride as a teacher. In this manner, the themes, and categories of the first phase were also reevaluated. The themes, categories, and codes of the second phase are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*What are the views of Turkish language pre-service teachers on “being a teacher” in terms of Feride the Wren?*

THEME	CATEGORY	CODE
Feride as the Wren	Personal	Emotional Cheerful Brave Humorous Proud Modern
	Professional	Emotional Passionate Affectionate Likes to share Self-sacrificing Modern Maternal
Feride’s Change	Personal	Aware Integrator
	Professional	Determined Feels like a teacher
Feride in the eye of the society	Perspective	A female teacher A Single teacher A young teacher A western teacher
	Difficulties	Specialization Merit/favoritism Lack of facilities Cultural and mentality differences

Table 2 shows the themes, categories, and codes that are related to the second research question. These themes are associated with “being a teacher” and Feride the Wren. The findings of the second question are presented according to the themes.

### ***Feride as the Wren (Myself as a teacher)***

Pre-service teachers constantly stated that Feride is not a teacher. They could not identify Feride as an idealist teacher because she chooses to teach for personal reasons.

*Her (Feride’s) being a teacher is not rooted in her intention but in running away from her problems and not facing them (P1)*

*Feride does not think to be a teacher actually after her school life..somehow, she decides with the impact of her feelings (P7)*

As indicated above, when the pre-service teachers were asked to identify Feride

as a character and as a teacher, it was not easy for them to address Feride as a teacher however they anyhow accepted that Feride is one of the most idealized teacher characters in Turkey. Proud is the most frequently repeated property attributed to Feride by the pre-service teachers. They were also impressed by her courage to go to remote towns of Anatolia as a single woman at that period, and her ambition to make her own decisions. They easily associated her characteristics with her way of teaching. Feride builds her teaching with the support of her ambitious and cheerful nature. These personal traits were also repeated in some of the diaries of the pre-service teachers. Her western and modern educational background forms her teaching. In this manner, pre-service teachers stated that Feride, who has no intention of being a teacher, shapes her professional life through “being a teacher” with the help of her personality and her previous educational experiences.

*She shows her passion and love in terms of her teaching..Her teaching is based on love (P4)*

*She escapes from the difficulties from her personal life, but she isn't the same in her professional life (from the diary of P4)*

*Feride is not a self-disciplined teacher. She is an affectionate, sympathetic woman. Her teaching is just the same (P41)*

*Actually, she has no intention to be a teacher...But she tries to manage her class. She remembers..Soeur Aleksii..her former teacher..and tries to behave like her. She might be regarded as a modern teacher apart from a traditionalist and essentialist teacher. She wants to be an inspiration (P32)*

*She does not have a previously learned technique and methodology. She transfers what she knows (P16)*

*Feride is an ambitious character. She doesn't ignore her students' problems. She stubbornly deals with all the difficulties (from the diary of P16)*

*She reflects her personal traits to her way of teaching; this is inevitable because she has no teacher training (from the diary of P17)*

### ***Feride's change (The teacher I am going to be)***

Some of the pre-service teachers realized the professional improvement in Feride and stated that this improvement reflects in her teaching. Some others did not agree with the prominence of this improvement nevertheless they accepted Feride's maturation in time.

*She realizes “being a teacher” later. In the beginning, she is more like an elder sister..But she becomes professional in time with her experiences (P17)*

*At the very beginning, she cannot understand the intentions of other people..I think she improves in that way (P16)*

*She says “I will dedicate myself to the children till all my hair turns gray. This does not scare me anymore”. This means she is at first afraid but then changes.*

*This is an improvement I think (P55)*

*She arranges the seating in the classroom, she exercises studying quietly.. these are all innovations in her classes (P41)*

*Feride has changed silently throughout the novel; I think she learns how to teach in her own way (from the diary of P41)*

### ***Feride in the eye of the society (Teaching profession in society)***

Pre-service teachers refer to her marital status, gender, age, and educational background which distinguish her from the other characters in the novel. These are also variables that determine the social status of Feride. Pre-service teachers believed that if Feride lives in our times, she will also create a difference with these properties.

*Reşat Nuri's primary intention to write this book is to overcome some prejudices in Anatolia. Feride represents a single woman standing on her own in Anatolia. But we see that Anatolia is not ready for this (P32)*

*I think, if Feride is a male, all these would not happen. This is a matter of gender, social gender (P41)*

*I think she was raised in a different environment and comes from a privileged class. She gets a different education; her manners are different. That's why she is different and takes attention to where she is appointed (P16)*

*She is humiliated. She is nicknamed even by the authorities. I am not sure whether this is because of her age or gender but I guess these are all problems (P41)*

Pre-service teachers often compare Feride's difficulties with the problems that the teaching profession faces today. Appointments without having teacher training, favoritism in appointments, unmerited appointments, lack of facilities, and culture and mentality gaps between the east and west parts of Turkey are the handicaps that they underline.

*The first difficulty is her education. She is not trained as a teacher (P4)*

*She has no friends at court. This is a handicap for her (P17)*

*Professionalism is a great problem. She is first a music teacher; then she is appointed as a Turkish language teacher; and once she becomes a French language teacher (P41)*

*Feride could not be appointed if she lived today (P16)*

*There are still places having infrastructure problems...She would probably experience a lack of facilities if she were a teacher in rural areas today (P16)*

*I am not sure but if Feride is a real character, I guess she experiences nearly the same things in her professional life. Being a single woman in east part of Turkey is hard (from the diary of P32)*

## **Discussion**

This study set out with the aim of examining Turkish language pre-service teachers' views on "being a teacher" in terms of their evaluations of Feride who is the main character of *The Wren* by Reşat Nuri Güntekin and is one of the most idealized teacher images in Turkey. The results are discussed and intertwined with the research questions considering related literature.

Results suggest that pre-service teachers portray a series of features attributed to a teacher such as patient, tolerant, good-humored, love of teaching, and being with children. This result corroborates the ideas of Banner and Cannon (1997), who notes: "what teachers do cannot be distinguished from who they are" (p. 43). In the same vein, Kavrayıcı (2020) reminds us that "personal characteristics such as love for teaching, having good communication skills, being patient and tolerant would affect developing and shaping teacher identity" (p.104). A great deal of literature supported the idea that enjoying teaching and being with children are among the main inclinations for anyone who desires to be a teacher (Boz & Boz, 2008; Deliveli, 2021; Hacıömeroğlu&Taşkın,2010; Ubuz & Sarı, 2008). In addition to this, pre-service teachers constantly underline a devoted, responsible, and patient teacher image. They strongly underline the social and formative role of a teacher. The common point of their statements on the teaching profession is the leading role of a teacher who serves to improve society. Besides, a teacher is a guide for an individual's life with the characteristics of being fair and tolerant. The most obvious finding is that almost every participant emphasizes the divine nature of the teaching occupation. Participants believe that teachers sacrifice their life, time, and family because the social mission is waiting for them. Overall, these results suggest that preservice teachers idealized a good teacher as a devoted and sacrificed person. They also take attention to the guiding function of the teacher as they repeatedly state the leading role of a teacher.

Written as a diary, *The Wren* is a story of a young woman called Feride. She is educated in a boarding school in Istanbul with a French school tradition. Her noisy and daring character gives her a nickname called *The Wren*. She is engaged to her cousin whom she is deeply in love with, but she realizes that he has cheated her. She escapes from her home and decides to be a teacher. She is appointed in a small town of Anatolia and that is how her teaching career begins. In his analysis of the teaching profession in Turkey, Güven (2010) states that teaching is perceived as a sacred/divine profession that requires so much devotion. The teaching profession has always been regarded as a fundamental job that shapes the future of society. This emphasis takes a central role in social structure as an ongoing historical process (Argunşah, 2021; Karaca, 2012). In a study by Akcan and Polat (2016), the pre-service teachers underline the role of a teacher as a pioneer for changing, reforming, and constructing society and an individual. This point of view which has been nearly the same since the beginning of the Turkish Republic also takes place in *The Wren*. Participants also evaluate Feride as a

devoted character for her students and to make a change in their lives. In both data sets of the research, most of the participants have this perception of the devoted teacher as a natural personality trait for a teacher to own. Feride, who has been the heroin for the ideals of the young teachers of a young republic, is discussed as a transforming character from a beautiful young lady escaping from her former fiancée to a devoted teacher. Pre-service teachers think Feride represents a devoted and idealist teacher of the early years of the republican period, who has the mission of transferring the republican ideology and developing the society. They also appreciate her brave and innovative personality in her way of teaching. Karagülle (2016) comments that Feride is not fictionalized as a story of a teaching career however the readers approach her as a prototype of an idealist teacher and nourish the willingness of going far in Anatolian towns to be a teacher. As mentioned in Göle's (1996) criticism, republican understanding desires a woman identity who devotes herself to her nation and society and prefers the teaching profession for her. In Demir's (2021) statement, professions such as teaching, midwifery, and the nursery that require helpfulness, compassion, love, and devotion are referred to as women's professions per social gender norms. By this means, Feride encourages young girls to choose the teaching profession (Demir, 2021; Kaplan, 1998; Tanpınar, 2007). This is also underlined in the diaries of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers have an agreement that Feride is not a teacher. This agreement has also been repeated in studies on *The Wren* (Argunşah, 2021; Aslan, 2021; Demir, 2021; Karaca, 2012; Karagülle, 2016). What is more, pre-service teachers state that the author depicts Feride as an ideal character who is dealing with financial, bureaucratic, and cultural problems but somehow does not reflect these handicaps in her teaching. Pre-service teachers point out that this is an unrealistic perspective. In Kavrayıcı's (2020) research which examines the factors affecting teacher identity development of pre-service teachers, the participants think that many of the teacher characters in movies, dramas, or books do not reflect real situations. This might create an illusion for the readers to illustrate a teacher as a divine personality who always behaves and acts in the classroom full of passion to train the students for society. Nevertheless, pre-service teachers suggest a teacher profile who sacrifices the self for education, who leaves personal problems out of the school, and who carries on no matter what occurs in his/her personal life. Moreover, they identify a teacher who embraces the students and society just like a patient and compassionate mother or a sister. However, while evaluating Feride, they find this kind of image unrealistic. Although pre-service teachers do not perceive Feride as an ideal teacher and cannot imagine her as their colleague, she has been exemplified as an ideal teacher profile for so long and additionally is strongly coherent with their profile of a good teacher. This is an interesting and conflicting conclusion of the current study.

As mentioned in the literature review, teacher identity, which is associated with how teachers see themselves as teachers and how they are perceived by others as te-



achers, consists of many dynamics features including values, beliefs, and experiences about teaching and being a teacher (Beijaar et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006). Findings suggest that pre-service teachers' descriptions of the teaching profession and "being a good teacher" is closely related to how they identify themselves as teachers. This concept is deeply affected by the participants' previous experiences just like their choice. Nearly all the participants of the current study indicate their volunteer choice of the teaching profession. The most repeated motivation for this choice is their previous teachers. Pre-service teachers also underline their characteristics which is coherent with what a teacher should be. It is also interesting to note that there is a close relationship between the personality traits of their previous teachers and the perception of "a good teacher". In this manner, pre-service teachers are in accord with their perception about a teacher and a good teacher, what kind of a teacher they will be in the future, and their previous role model teachers. A probable explanation of this consistency is that professional identification intertwines with personal identification. Brown (2006) holds the view that role models of individuals are a powerful indicator referring to what kind of teacher is a person. Numerous studies have argued that personal experiences before initial teacher education, especially the interaction with the previous teachers, have a vital role in shaping teacher images for pre-service teachers (Aykaç, Yildirim, Altinkurt & Marsh, 2017; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Izadinia, 2015; Seban, 2015).

Similarly, pre-service teachers identify Feride's character and her teaching style. According to them, Feride is a teacher as how she is. In other words, Feride's teaching style represents her personality. Moreover, she tries to remember and resemble what and how her previous teachers were. Although she is struggling with being a young and single woman in a conservative society, she gets strength from the playful and hasty side of her character and is innovative in her teaching. Participants often appreciate this effort. As pointed out above, a possible explanation for this might be the close relationship between the pre-service teachers' views on the teaching profession and "being a teacher". Consequently, these results might provide important insights into understanding teacher images of the pre-service teachers.

What pre-service teachers portray their future images as teachers is similar to that which they describe as a good teacher. This result is quite understandable as the pre-service teachers do not have enough professional experience yet. They state that they want to become professionally effective and experts in their fields. They want to leave a sensible and meaningful trace in the students' lives, and they strongly desire to be remembered in the future just like they remember their teachers. These results are likely to be related to the previous explanations about their intertwined views on "being a teacher".

Regarding Feride's change in time, some of the pre-service teachers refer to it as a personal maturity, and some deal with this change as professional as well. In Erikson's (1968) conceptualization, identity is a term that a person can develop throughout the

life period. Research also takes attention to the dynamic and changing nature of the teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Freisen & Besley, 2013). As Feride changes through her experiences with others, her teaching style, and her self-concept of being a teacher change as well. Furthermore, they believe that her personal experiences lead to her teaching career. As time goes by, Feride learns to be more stubborn and determined to change her students' lives. This observation supports their correlated views with Feride's characteristics in her teaching. Feride fights with and overcomes all the problems and experiences a journey "from being a mother of a person to the mother/teacher of the society" (Argunşah, 2021, p. 80).

Concerning the problems and handicaps of the teaching profession, pre-service teachers continuously underline the decreasing dignity of the profession and the lack of appointments. They refer to the divine nature of the profession whereas they observe that the prestige of the teaching profession is getting decreased than it has been once before. Furthermore, they think that teaching is considered an easy and comfortable job. While pre-service teachers outline the financial difficulties that the teachers face, they add teachers are thought to be well-paid. The teaching profession in Turkey has always been a highly preferred job since the early years of the Republic. Karaman and his friends (2013) explains this teaching profession is preferred due to being referred to as a state officer that has a regular income in Turkey. Helvacı (2007) adds that the teaching profession is one of the most respected jobs among state occupations. Although it has dignity, respect, and prestige at some point, several wrong political regulations lead to a mentality that teaching is so easy (Çelikten et al., 2005). Several studies have revealed that the teaching profession is not being respected as it has been once (Deliveli, 2021; Karaman et al, 2013; Karamustafaoğlu & Özmen, 2004). Interestingly, pre-service teachers underline nearly the same difficulties that Feride faces with as for the teaching profession. This emphasis is also observed in the diaries of the pre-service teachers. Uludağ (2008) evaluates *The Wren* in terms of educational problems and reaches that there have been similar problems even after such a long period: 1. Lack of facilities in schools, 2. Traditional methodologies in teaching, 3. Problems of teachers, 4. Difficulties and injustices in bureaucracy. The findings of the current study might add to these problems the cultural gap between Feride and the people living in the towns where she is appointed. Pre-service teachers point out this struggling situation as a young, beautiful, and single woman in their diaries. This result might be evaluated by how Feride is perceived in society.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the views of Turkish language pre-service teachers on "being a teacher" using a literate text *The Wren* by Reşat Nuri Güntekin. The results were discussed considering related literature on the teaching profession. In general, the results complement those of earlier studies. A key strength

of the present study was to understand the views of pre-service teachers employing a literate text which might reflect how they perceive themselves as teachers and how they are perceived as teachers in society. One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that the teaching profession has been evaluated as a social change agent which has the mission of leading and shaping the society for many years in Turkey and little has changed about this status despite its decreasing dignity. Overall, the current study has some limitations. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study with pre-service teachers throughout their previous education. Further research might also be conducted including teaching practice courses that might provide observation data. It is also suggested that further research might compare various sources such as books and movies on teachers to understand the views of the preservice teachers deeper.

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